

Fall Severe Weather

Shawn O'Neil

With Hurricane Season past the historical peak of September 10th and fall quickly approaching, we thought it would be a good time to discuss fall severe weather safety. Though the climatological peak for severe weather along the Northern Gulf Coast occurs from March to July, there is a secondary peak in the months of November and December. There are three hazards which qualify a thunderstorm as severe: a tornado, strong winds of 58 mph or greater, and hail .75" or larger. (As of February 2010, the hail criteria will increase to 1" or larger.)

Tornadoes are not a frequent occurrence along the Northern Gulf Coast, but they occasionally pose a significant threat to the area. On average, the area is affected by as many tornadoes in November as in April. The most important thing to do when a tornado threatens is to find a safe shelter. With the lack of basements and underground tornado shelters in the Deep South, the safest place to be during a tornado is an interior room of a permanent building (NOT a mobile home), preferably without windows. This might be a bathroom, a closet or even your hallway. Time is of the essence, so have a plan in advance on which room you will use.

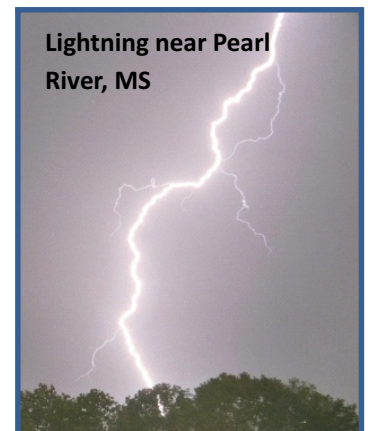


In addition to tornadoes, severe thunderstorms can produce very strong wind gusts. These gusts can sometimes cause significant damage to structures and trees. The safety procedure for strong winds is the same as for a tornado get to an interior room within a permanent structure, protect your head, and remain there until the storm passes.

Large hail can also accompany severe thunderstorms. When a thunderstorm becomes strong enough, the updraft of the storm can carry water droplets up to a height at which they freeze, forming hail stones. When the hail stones become too heavy for the updraft to support, they fall to the ground (sometimes at speeds greater than 100 mph). The stones can range in size from very small (the size of a pea) to very large (the size of a softball or grapefruit). The larger hail stones can cause significant damage or injury. For that reason, anytime a thunderstorm begins to produce hail, you should get indoors as quickly as possible to avoid the falling hail stones.

While a thunderstorm cannot technically be called severe due to lightning, lightning is one of the leading causes of death during severe weather. Lightning fatalities are most common during the afternoon and evenings hours when people are more likely to be participating in outdoor activities. The important thing to remember when dealing with lightning is that no place outdoors is safe. Get to any indoor shelter that you can find as quickly as possible and keep clear of anything inside that can conduct electricity such as cordless phone, appliances and plumbing. Lightning often strikes as far as 10 miles away from the rainfall occurring in a thunderstorm. Remember, if you can hear thunder you are close enough to be struck by lightning.

It is very important that you and your family have a plan for when severe weather strikes. If possible, have a designated safe room with supplies. Practice your plan and make sure all members of the household know what to do when necessary.



Background Picture: Funnel Cloud (center) near Baton Rouge, LA (9/18/09)

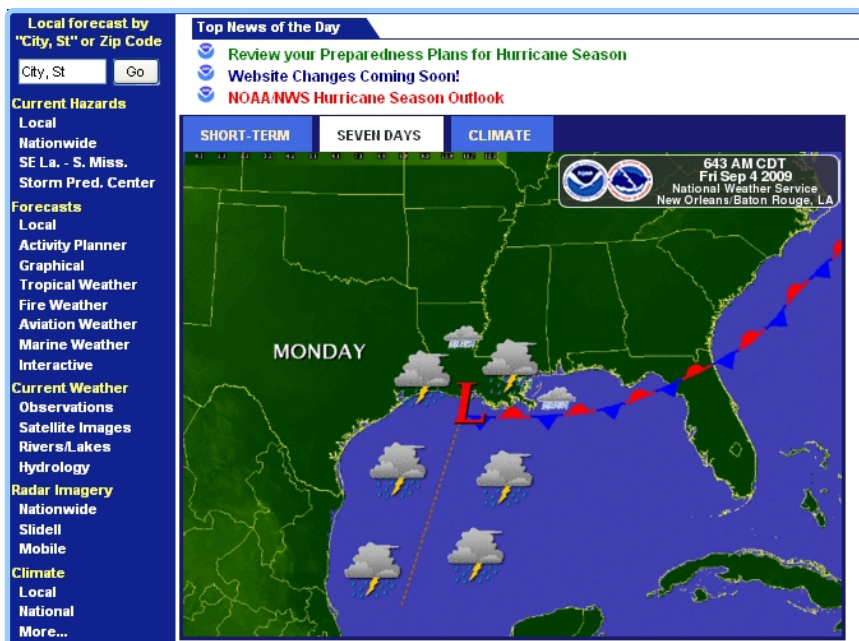


New Website Preview

Mike Efferson

If you've been to our website recently, you may have noticed the following headline: [Website Changes Coming Soon!](#) This link has been posted on the front page explaining upcoming internal changes. In previous years, when our website was overloaded with a high volume of users, the website server failed. The new system will greatly reduce the chance of failure.

While the general layout is mostly unchanged, a few very visible changes have taken place on the NWS LIX website most noticeably the addition of graphical forecasts to the front page (refer to the image at left). Up to 5 tabs will appear at

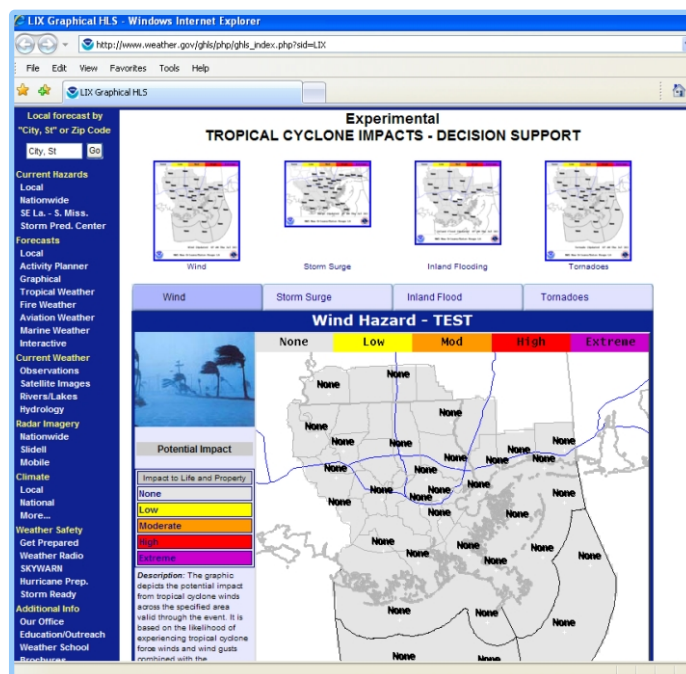


once ranging from forecasts related to tropical activity to climate or a short-term briefing. Additionally, some of these tabs will be animated meaning that you could see multiple frames. An example: on a "7-day" or "extended" tab, a different frame will load approximately every few seconds. You can also click on one of the displayed images to be directed to another link on our website where the main image will be displayed in the main panel with rest of the tabs displayed as smaller images to the right. Underneath the main image, additional information will occasionally be included to explain what the graphics mean. We are still in the learning phase with this new addition to our webpage, so feedback would be very appreciated. You can reach us by emailing <sr-lix.webmaster@noaa.gov>.

Occasionally, a banner will be displayed above the "Top News of the Day". Our intentions are to reserve this feature for higher impact events when we feel an attention grabber is needed. It is designed to link the user to another website to provide more information on the impact. A few possible links could be: National Hurricane Center, Storm Prediction Center, etc.

One final experimental change is known as the Graphical Hurricane Local Statement. In short, impacts expected from a tropical cyclone expected to impact the area will be broken into four main components and displayed graphically. Each impact will display the potential for that hazard and will range from LOW to EXTREME. For more information concerning this new product, please refer to the image at right or visit the following website:

<http://www.weather.gov/ghls/php/ghls_index.php?sid=LIX>.



Calling All Volunteers

The National Weather Service New Orleans/Baton Rouge forecast office manages a variety of student-oriented programs. These programs range in scope from paid positions to volunteer appointments and to job shadowing opportunities. Each of these programs is designed to give students a unique experience tailored to the needs and interests of the individual students. Courtney Legendre is a junior at the University of Louisiana at Monroe and holds a SCEP appointment (paid position) at our office. Here is Courtney's first-hand account describing her experience as a SCEP student this summer:



"The Student Career Experience Program offers students work experience directly related to their academic field of study. The students are able to work while also still attending school. After working 640 hours as a SCEP, the student, upon graduation, may be noncompetitively converted to a permanent position working for the National Weather Service an unbelievable opportunity for anyone seeking employment with the NWS.

"As a SCEP, I was exposed to many different skills and techniques that are used in the meteorological field. I already knew some of the information that was presented, but most of it was new to me. During my time at the NWS this summer, I was trained and certified on the Upper Air system used to take balloon observations. Through hands-on training, I also learned to use several programs common in NWS operations and was even able to issue river flood warnings.

The Bayou Observer

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"In addition to my time spent learning the operational aspects of the office, I was also able to take a few trips outside of the office. On a cooperative program visit, I helped an NWS employee teach new cooperative observers how to use their new equipment. I also went to NASA Stennis Space Center to visit NOAA's National Data Buoy Center, which is where buoys are built and maintained. These buoys are then positioned over the Gulf of Mexico (or other body of water) so that the NWS can receive weather data over marine areas.

For anyone planning to pursue or already working on an atmospheric science degree, I highly recommend applying for the Student Career Experience Program, so you too can share the same great experience working for the National Weather Service as I did this summer."

SCEP positions are generally opened once a year depending on NWS budget constraints and office needs. For more information concerning the SCEP program (or any other student programs), you may contact Danielle Manning at the following email address:
<Danielle.Manning@noaa.gov>.

Pictures:

Above Courtney preparing the weather balloon for launch
Right WFO LIX's 2008 summer volunteers



The Fun Zone

Find the following words in the box below. They can be forwards, backwards, up, down or diagonal.

Anemometer	Flash Flood	Lightning	Severe Storm	Watch
Barometer	Funnel Cloud	Meteorology	Sleet	Weather
Cloud	Hail	Pressure	Snow	Weather Radio
Cold Front	Heat Index	Radar	Thunder	Wind
Dense Fog	Humidity	Rain	Tornado	Wind Chill
Dew Point	Hurricane	Rain Gauge	Warning	

